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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION**

CAREN EHRET, individually and on )  
behalf of a class of similarly situated )  
persons, ) **COMPLAINT**  
Plaintiff, )  
v. ) **CLASS ACTION**  
UBER TECHNOLOGIES, INC., a ) **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**  
Delaware Corporation, )  
Defendant. )

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1 Plaintiff Caren Ehret (“Plaintiff” or “Ehret”), on behalf of herself and on behalf of a class  
 2 of similarly situated individuals, complains against Defendant Uber Technologies, Inc.  
 3 (“Defendant” or “Uber”) as follows:

4 **I. NATURE OF CASE**

5 1. Uber provides a mobile phone application that provides consumers with a means  
 6 to obtain transportation services from third party taxi and other transportation providers.  
 7 Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of herself and a class of similarly situated individuals who  
 8 were subjected to Uber’s illegal and deceptive practices of misrepresenting to consumers the true  
 9 nature of charges made to consumers in connection with these services.

10 2. More specifically, Uber advertises and represents on its website and other  
 11 marketing materials that gratuity will be automatically added at a set percentage of the metered  
 12 fare. Uber, however, does not remit the full amount of gratuity represented to consumers to the  
 13 taxi driver/owner and/or company actually providing the transportation service. Instead, Uber  
 14 keeps a substantial portion of this additional charge for itself as its own additional revenue and  
 15 profit on each ride arranged and paid for by consumers, including Plaintiff. Uber’s uniform  
 16 conduct is equally applicable to the class and constitutes an unfair, unlawful and fraudulent  
 17 business practice in violation of the Unfair Competition Law, California Business and  
 18 Professions Code § 17200, *et seq.*

19 **II. JURISDICTION**

20 3. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332(d)(2).  
 21 The matter in controversy, exclusive of interest and costs, exceeds the sum or value of  
 22 \$5,000,000 and is a class action in which there are numerous class members who are citizens of  
 23 states different from Defendant. The number of members of the proposed class is in the  
 24 aggregate greater than 100 and more than two-thirds of the class members reside in states other  
 25 than the state in which Defendant is a citizen.

26 4. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because it is headquartered in  
 27 San Francisco, California, it conducts business in California and a substantial portion of the acts  
 28 complained of took place in San Francisco, California.

III. VENUE

5. Venue is proper in the Northern District of California (San Francisco Division) because Defendant is headquartered in this District, conducts business in this District and many of the acts complained of occurred in this District. Plaintiff originally brought this action in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois in an action entitled *Ehret v. Uber Technologies, Inc.*, Case No. 12 CH 36714. On June 7, 2013 and June 18, 2013, the Judge presiding in that action dismissed the suit for lack of venue based solely on a forum selection provision in Defendant's terms and conditions, which dismissal order specifically stated that it was without prejudice to refile the action in San Francisco, California.

IV. PARTIES

6. Plaintiff Caren Ehret is an individual and citizen of Illinois.

7. Defendant Uber Technologies, Inc. is a Delaware corporation with its headquarters in San Francisco, California.

V. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

8. Uber's application or "app" allows consumers to summon, arrange and pay for taxi cab rides and other transportation services electronically via their mobile phones. Payment for transportation arranged through Uber's app is made via consumers' credit card accounts, after the consumer provides the necessary credit card account information to Uber.

9. On its website and on its app Uber represents its "Hassle-free Payments" as follows: "We automatically charge your credit card the metered fare + 20% *gratuity*." (italics added). Similarly, when consumers, including Plaintiff and the class, book taxi rides on Uber's app, the text of the app represents to those consumers that a 20% *gratuity* will be automatically added to the metered fare.

10. Uber intends consumers to rely upon the representations alleged above in arranging and paying for transportation via Uber's app.

11. Uber, however, does not remit the full amount of the charge that it represents to consumers, including Plaintiff and the class, as a "*gratuity*" to the taxi driver/owner and/or company actually providing the transportation service. Instead, Uber keeps a substantial portion

1 of this additional charge for itself as its own additional revenue and profit on each ride arranged  
 2 and paid for by consumers, including Plaintiff and the class.

3       12.     Uber's representations to consumers, including Plaintiff and the class, that the  
 4 charge that is automatically added or included in the fare for "*gratuity*" is false, misleading and  
 5 likely to deceive members of the public. Indeed, the term "*gratuity*" suggests a sum paid to the  
 6 driver/owner in recognition of transportation service that is distinct and different from the actual  
 7 fare. Otherwise, there is no reason to make a distinction between the "metered fare" and the  
 8 "*gratuity*," as Uber takes care to do with beguiling emphasis and repetition in its advertisements.  
 9 By retaining a substantial portion of the so-called "*gratuity*," Uber effectively increases the  
 10 "metered fare." This is false advertising.

11       13.     On September 9, 2012, Plaintiff arranged and paid for taxi cab rides in Chicago,  
 12 Illinois using Uber's app and was charged and paid 20% over and above the stated "metered  
 13 fare" for each such ride in reliance upon Uber's representation that this additional 20% charge  
 14 was a "*gratuity*" and the understandable belief that it was thus different in character and purpose  
 15 from the stated "metered fare" to which she had agreed and which she paid. Consistent with its  
 16 practice, Uber retained for itself a substantial portion of the 20% so-called "*gratuity*."

17       14.     Plaintiff was thus misled and proximately caused to pay sums greater than the  
 18 "metered fare" for taxi cab rides based upon Uber's misrepresentation that all of the additional  
 19 20% charge over and above the "metered fare" was a "*gratuity*." But for Uber's  
 20 misrepresentations Plaintiff would not have agreed to or paid Uber the full amount that Uber  
 21 charged her and that she paid to Uber.

## 22                   VI. CLASS ALLEGATIONS

23       15.     Plaintiff brings this action as a class action pursuant to Federal Rules of Civil  
 24 Procedure 23(a), 23(b)(1), 23(b)(2) and 23(b)(3) on behalf of herself and a class of individuals  
 25 defined as:

26       All individuals who arranged for taxi cab rides through Uber's mobile phone  
 27 application and paid any amount that was designated as gratuity.

1 Specifically excluded from the class are Defendant, Defendant's officers, directors and  
2 employees, and members of their immediate families, and any Judge who may preside over this  
3 case and his or her immediate family.

4       16. The members of the class are so numerous that joinder of all members is  
5 impracticable. The exact number of class members is unknown at this time but can be  
6 determined through Defendant's records. Plaintiff believes there are thousands, if not tens of  
7 thousands, of class members.

8       17. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the members of the class as all such  
9 members were similarly affected by Defendant's wrongful conduct as alleged herein.

10      18. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately represent the interests of the class members.  
11 Plaintiff has retained competent and experienced class counsel.

12      19. Common questions of law and fact predominate over any individual issues. The  
13 common questions of law and fact include:

- 14       a. Whether Defendant represented on its website and other marketing materials that  
15           gratuity will be automatically added at a set percentage of the metered fare;
- 16       b. Whether Defendant kept or otherwise failed to remit a portion of the amount that  
17           it represented was for gratuity;
- 18       c. Whether Defendant's conduct constituted an unfair business practice in violation  
19           of the Unfair Competition Law, California Business and Professions Code §  
20           17200, *et seq.*;
- 21       d. Whether Defendant's conduct constituted an unlawful business practice in  
22           violation of the Unfair Competition Law, California Business and Professions  
23           Code § 17200, *et seq.*;
- 24       e. Whether Defendant's conduct constituted a fraudulent business practice in  
25           violation of the Unfair Competition Law, California Business and Professions  
26           Code § 17200, *et seq.*; and
- 27       f. Whether Plaintiff and class members are entitled to damages and the proper  
28           measure of such damages.

1       20. A class action is superior to any other available means for the fair and efficient  
 2 adjudication of this controversy. The damages suffered by Plaintiff and the other class members  
 3 are relatively small compared to the burden and expense that would be required to individually  
 4 litigate their claims against Defendant, so it would be impracticable for class members to  
 5 individually seek redress for Defendant's wrongful conduct. Litigating individual class  
 6 members' claims would also produce a multiplicity of cases, congesting the judicial system, and  
 7 creates a potential for inconsistent or contradictory judgments. Class treatment, by contrast,  
 8 provides manageable judicial treatment calculated to bring a rapid conclusion to the litigation of  
 9 all claims arising from Defendant's misconduct. Class certification, therefore, is appropriate  
 10 under Rule 23(b)(3).

11       21. Class certification is also appropriate under Rule 23(b)(1) because the prosecution  
 12 of separate actions by individual members of the class would create a risk of adjudications with  
 13 respect to individual class members that would, as a practical matter, be dispositive of the  
 14 interests of the other members not parties to this adjudication and/or substantially impair their  
 15 ability to protect these interests.

16       22. Class certification is also appropriate under Rule 23(b)(2) because Defendant has  
 17 acted, or refused to act, on grounds generally applicable to the class, thereby making final  
 18 injunctive relief or corresponding declaratory relief appropriate for the class.

#### **COUNT I – VIOLATION OF UNFAIR COMPETITION LAW**

19       23. Plaintiff incorporates all previous paragraphs into this Count I as if fully alleged  
 20 herein.

22       24. The conduct of Defendant alleged above constitutes an unfair, unlawful and  
 23 fraudulent business practice in violation of the Unfair Competition Law, California Business and  
 24 Professions Code § 17200, *et seq.* ("UCL").

25       25. The misrepresentations and omissions alleged herein are fraudulent, and thus  
 26 amount to unfair competition as set forth in the UCL, in that Defendant misrepresented charges  
 27 as "gratuity" when, in fact, such amounts were not gratuity paid to the driver, but instead were  
 28 kept by Defendant. Such misrepresentations and omissions are likely to deceive, and in fact

1 have deceived, reasonable consumers.

2       26. The misrepresentations and omissions alleged herein are unlawful, and thus  
 3 amount to unfair competition as set forth in the UCL, in that they violate, among other things,  
 4 California Civil Code §§ 1572, 1709 and 1710, as well as California Business & Professions  
 5 Code § 17500. As set forth above, Defendant willfully deceived Plaintiff and class members by  
 6 misrepresenting certain charges as a “gratuity” with the intent to induce them to alter their  
 7 positions to their injury. Defendant’s representations regarding the charge for “gratuity” were  
 8 untrue and misleading and Defendant knew, or by exercising reasonable care should have  
 9 known, such representations were untrue and misleading. Defendant disseminated these untrue  
 10 and misleading representations as part of a plan or scheme with the intent not to sell its services  
 11 as so advertised.

12       27. The misrepresentations and omissions alleged herein are unfair, and thus amount  
 13 to unfair competition as set forth in the UCL, in that they are immoral, unethical, oppressive,  
 14 unscrupulous and substantially injurious to consumers. The injury to Plaintiff and class members  
 15 caused by Defendant’s conduct greatly outweighs any alleged countervailing benefit to  
 16 consumers or competition under all of the circumstances.

17       28. As a direct and proximate cause of Defendant’s violations of the UCL, Plaintiffs  
 18 and the Class suffered an injury in fact and have suffered monetary harm. Defendant, on the  
 19 other hand, has been unjustly enriched and should be required to make restitution to Plaintiff and  
 20 the class and/or disgorge its ill-gotten profits pursuant to Business & Professions Code § 17203.

21       29. Defendant’s unlawful, unfair and fraudulent business practices, as described  
 22 herein, present a continuing threat to Plaintiff, the class and the general public in that Defendant  
 23 continues to misrepresent the true nature of the charges imposed on consumers. In addition,  
 24 Defendant has been unjustly enriched as a result of its conduct. Plaintiff and the class seek  
 25 equitable relief because they have no other adequate remedy at law. Absent equitable relief,  
 26 Defendant will continue to injure consumers, reap unjust enrichment and harm the public’s  
 27 interest, thus engendering a multiplicity of judicial proceedings.

28

## **REQUEST FOR RELIEF**

**WHEREFORE**, Plaintiff, on behalf of herself and the class of similarly situated individuals, requests the Court to:

- (a) Certify the case as a class action pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, designate Plaintiff as representative of the class and designate counsel of record as class counsel;
  - (b) Award damages, in an amount to be determined at trial, to compensate Plaintiff and class members for their losses;
  - (c) Order Defendant to provide restitution to Plaintiff and class members and/or order Defendant to disgorge profits it realized as a result of its unlawful conduct;
  - (d) Award punitive damages;
  - (e) Declare Defendant's conduct unlawful and enter an order enjoining Defendant from continuing to engage in the conduct alleged herein;
  - (f) Award pre-judgment and post-judgment interest;
  - (g) Award reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to, *inter alia*, Cal. Code Civ. Proc. § 1021.5; and
  - (h) Award all other relief this Court deems just and appropriate.

## **JURY DEMAND**

Plaintiff demands a trial by jury on all claims set forth herein.

Dated: January 8, 2014  
Respectfully submitted,

MYRON M. CHERRY & ASSOCIATES LLC  
MYRON M. CHERRY (50278)

By: /s/ Myron M. Cherry  
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